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Pin Cushion

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Gena Vee Broderick
Orem, Utah
November 2018

"Pin Cushion"
Material Culture

Informant:

Gena Vee Broderick is my grandmother. She was born during the Great Depression in Orem, Utah. She was nine years old during the attack on Pearl Harbor and she cites that and her awareness of WWII as the root of her intense patriotism. She loved attending school and was extremely bright. After graduating from high school when she was only in 10th grade, she worked in a potato chip factory to save money for BYU tuition. She met and married my grandfather and raised 9 children in Orem, Utah. She worked as an elementary school teacher and decorated wedding cakes to help support the family. She and my grandfather lived in England for a few years before moving back to Utah. Her subtle and exceedingly witty sense of humor never ceases. She finds happiness in spending time with her grandchildren, gardening, and caring for others.

Context:

My grandmother told me this story while I was at her house on the day after Thanksgiving. We were still satiated from the feast, but the aroma from the leftovers were enticing us to go back for a second time. We have a large family due to my grandma having 9 children and each in turn contributing their own. When we sat down in the off-limits living room (no children allowed), we could barely hear over the noise of my family members in the other rooms. Previously, I told her about folklore and asked if she would attempt to think of some stories or experiences to tell me. My mom had told me this story before, but it was actually Sally Knight who is Lydia's daughter. Sally Knight crossed the plains with the Mormon pioneers when she was only twelve years old. My mother has the cushion at her house and she sent me a picture (attached below). Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. My grandmother is a member of this church.

Text:

Gena Vee: Lydia Knight, she's what your sixth or seventh great-grandmother, she made a pin cushion
by hand and embroidered it and everything and then she handed it down

Me: Oh, I think my mom has shown me picture of that

Gena Vee: Well she has it, your mother has it

Me: She has the actual cushion?

Gena Vee: Uh-huh she has the actual cushion and there are pictures of it too my mother gave it to her with a special letter, and she will choose who she wants to pass it down to

Me: Why did she choose my mom [laughter]?

Gena Vee: Well she chose your mom because uh it was a mutual assignment that your mother had, is there some heirloom or something that uh was passed down just like this that was special to you and so and she asked mom [Gena Vee's mother] if she had something and mom told her about the pin cushion and then she said she could have it and so she gave it to her I think that's the way it was and she has the letter from mom telling her about it so one of you kids will get it [laughter] someday, but boy when you talk about that and this Lydia Knight was her, her father, well, her husband, was a very good friend of the prophet Joseph Smith and there is a book that is the Stand by the Prophet, and he stayed by the prophet Joseph Smith and never turned against him or anything, so she is quite famous, but anyway, that pin cushion has been handed down and down through the ages and you've got to get that letter and see that.



Texture:

My grandmother was reserved while telling me about this heirloom. She spoke with a soft tone and quiet hands. Her volume was constant and subdued; the words conveyed pride in her ancestors. She had a surety in her words and was speaking with discreet confidence. I could tell that she was feeling a strong connection to family during the telling, because she was continuously taking my hand or stroking my shoulder.

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Survey of American Folklore
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